

35  
I am  
Bing  
THE GRAVE

OF

HENRY MARTYN.

DESCRIPTION TO ACCOMPANY THE PICTURE.

BY

REV. HENRY J. VAN LENNEP, D.D.,

MISSIONARY OF THE A. B. C. F. M., AT TOCAT, IN TURKEY.

Printed in Oil Colors by Messrs. Endicott & Co.

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH, PUBLISHER,  
683 BROADWAY.

1863.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Columbia University Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/graveofhenrymart00vanl>

# THE GRAVE

OF

# HENRY MARTYN.

DESCRIPTION TO ACCOMPANY THE PICTURE.

BY

REV. HENRY J. VAN LENNEP, D.D.,

MISSIONARY OF THE A. B. C. F. M., AT TOCAT, IN TURKEY.

Printed in Oil Colors by Messrs. Endicott & Co.

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH, PUBLISHER,  
683 BROADWAY.

1863.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by

A. O. VAN LENNEP,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern  
District of New York.

THE GRAVE  
OF  
HENRY MARTYN.

---

HENRY MARTYN, the well-known Missionary, was, with Brainerd and Carey, a pioneer in the work of Foreign Missions; and to these three, preëminently, is to be attributed the Missionary spirit which characterizes the Christian Church of the 19th century. He was an Englishman, but he was still more a Christian; and American Christian can justly claim some ownership in his labors from the fact that his zeal had much of its origin in influences arising from our side of the ocean. The following statement is taken from the admirable Memoir by Sargeant:

“The immediate cause of his determination to undertake the office of a Missionary, was hearing the Rev. Mr. Simeon remark on the benefit which had resulted from the services of a single Missionary in India (Dr. Carey); his

attention was thus arrested, and his thoughts occupied with the vast importance of the subject. Soon after which, perusing the life of David Brainerd, who preached with Apostolical zeal and success to the North American Indians, and who finished a course of self-denying labors for his Redeemer, with unspeakable joy, at the early age of thirty-two, his soul was filled with a holy emulation of that extraordinary man; and, after deep consideration and fervent prayer, he was at length fixed in a resolution to imitate his example."

Henry Martyn resided and labored in India and Persia from 1805 to 1812, and translated the Holy Scriptures into Hindoostanee and Persian. His health having been very much shattered by his manifold labors and privations he started for home during the latter year, but was overtaken by sickness and death at Tocat, on the 16th of October, and entered into the rest of his Lord. The following passages from his Memoir portray the circumstances of his death, rendered the more painful to us from the meagreness of our surmises. His Journal, written on the road between Erzroom and Tocat, has the following :

" Oct. 5. Preserving mercy made me see the light of another morning. The sleep has refreshed me, but I was feeble and shaken; yet the merciless Hassan hurried me off. The menzil, however, not being distant, I reached it without much difficulty. I expected to have found it another

strong fort at the end of the pass, but it is a poor little village within the jaws of the mountains. I was pretty well lodged, and felt tolerably well until a little after sunset, when the ague came on with a violence I had never before experienced. I felt as if in a palsy; my teeth chattering, and my whole frame violently shaken. Aga Hosyn and another Persian, on their way here from Constantinople, going to Abbas Mirza, whom I had just before been visiting came hastily to render me assistance if they could. These Persians seem quite brotherly, after the Turks. While they pitied me, Hassan sat in perfect indifference, ruminating on the further delay this was likely to occasion. The cold fit, after continuing two or three hours, was followed by a fever, which lasted the whole night, and prevented sleep."

"Oct. 6. No horses being to be had, I had an unexpected repose. I sat in the orchard and thought, with sweet comfort and peace, of my God—in solitude my company, my friend, and comforter. Oh! when shall time give place to eternity! When shall appear that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness! There, there shall in no wise enter in anything that defileth—none of that wickedness which has made men worse than wild beasts—none of those corruptions which add still more to the miseries of mortality, shall be seen or heard of any more."

“ Scarcely had Mr. Martyn breathed these aspirations after that state of blissful purity, for which he had attained such a measure of meetness, when he was called to exchange a condition of pain, weakness, and suffering, for that everlasting ‘ rest that remaineth for the people of God.’

“ At Tocat, on the 16th of October, 1812, either falling a sacrifice to the plague, which then raged there, or, sinking under that disorder which, when he penned his last words, had so greatly reduced him, he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Redeemer.”

My first visit to Tocat was in the year 1844, and one of the objects to which my earliest attention was directed on my arrival, was the grave of Henry Martyn. The Armenian burying ground, where he was laid, is situated just outside the town, and hard by the wretched Gypsy quarter, which forms its eastern extremity. It is a most barren and desolate spot, wedged in by lofty cliffs of clay slate. Its only verdure, besides the rank weeds that spring up between the thickly set graves, consists of two scraggy wild pear trees, nearly dead from lack of moisture.

The late lamented Missionaries, Smith and Dwight, had found, in 1830, that the grave was known to many persons in Tocat. Not so after an interval of fourteen years, when I sought to identify the spot. The sexton of the church near by could give me no information, so I undertook the search quite alone. Beginning with the graves lying at the

outer edge of the ground nearest the road, I advanced toward the hill, examining each in its turn, until just at the foot of the overhanging cliffs, I came upon a slab of coarse limestone, some 40 inches by 20, bearing the following inscription :

R E V. V I R.  
G U G. \* M A R T I N O.  
S A C E R. A C. M I S S. A N G L O.  
QUEM. IN. PATR. R E D I.  
DOMINUS.  
H I C. B E R I S A E. A D. S B. V O C.  
P I U M. D. F I D E L. Q. S E R.  
A. D. M D C C C X I I.  
H U N C. L A P. C O N S A C.  
C. J. R.  
A. D. M D C C C X I I I.

Just ten years elapsed after this, my first visit, when I found myself again in Tocat, not as a transient visitor, but with the purpose of making that city the permanent residence of myself and family. A little party of us, without delay, repaired to the hallowed spot. Guided by my own recollection, and the accurate drawing which I had made at my previous visit, we were soon at the place; but in the last few years it had undergone a remarkable change. In-

\* Mr. Rich, British Resident at Bagdad, who had laid this monumental slab, was evidently ignorant of Martyn's Christian name.

stead of the slab of stone with its inscription, which we expected to see, we found only a smooth surface of pebbly and sandy soil, overgrown with weeds, no vestige of *stone* or *mound* to indicate the presence of a grave, yet there remained the identical surroundings, too well remembered to be mistaken. Could it be that, as it frequently happens in these lawless regions, the stone had been removed by some ruthless hand, and incorporated in the wall of a neighboring building? I could not believe it; and calling the sexton, I directed him to dig in a spot I pointed out. It was at a depth of two feet from the surface that a corner of the old stone came into view. The soil and rubbish, the accumulated wash of ten successive winters were then thoroughly cleared off, and we hoped the place would in future need little attention. But to my great surprise, when I visited the grave the next spring, I found it covered again to nearly the same depth as before. It would seem that, from the present direction of the watercourses above, this evil would be of difficult removal. Were a wall to be built of sufficient dimensions to turn aside the winter torrents, it would be looked upon as a mark of distinction too great for a *heretic*, and the Gypsy boys would soon demolish it.

Some time after this period I was writing to my excellent friend, the late Rev. Mr. Young, the originator of the Turkish Missions' Aid Society, respecting the labors of

some of our native theological students in the neighboring villages, and incidentally mentioned the condition in which we had found the grave of the noble Missionary martyr, whose name had made Tocat a hallowed city in view of all Christendom. Mr. Young soon after replied, saying that he had been deeply interested by my account, and had consulted with the principal Chaplain of the Hon. East India Company's Board of Directors; that a liberal sum had been appropriated by them for the erection of a suitable monument, and that I was desired to remove the remains to the burying ground on the Mission premises, and to suggest a model for a monument. I wrote in reply that fine marble could be obtained near by, and that, although the workmen were unskilful, yet, I was confident they might be so directed as to insure success, thus saving the expense and risk of sending a monument all the way from England to our inland town. I forwarded a drawing of the proposed structure, which was adopted. It was to have four faces, with the same inscription upon each, but in a different language, that all might read the honorable record. The inscription itself was furnished by them.

The cutting of the monument was found to be no easy task. A small model was first cut out in wood for the direction of the workmen, but they could not be made to comprehend it. No way remained but to take the rule in hand and direct them where to cut. After much time and

labor, however, I had the satisfaction of seeing it completed and meeting the approbation of all who saw it.

The next step was to remove the remains. Dr. Jewett, who lately finished his course by a most sudden death at Liverpool, while on his way back to his Mission, was then my associate, and we went in company to the place of the dead, having previously obtained the authorization of the city governor and the Armenian Bishop. After removing the stone from its place, we dug down about two feet before we came upon any remains. Being aware that the people here bury their dead one after another in the same grave until a stone is laid upon the top of it, we were prepared to find in this grave the bones of persons buried there during the interval of about a year which elapsed from the period of Martyn's death to the time of the laying of his tomb-stone. And so it proved; for the relics first found were identified by my medical colleague as belonging to women and children. These were carefully removed, and we continued on, removing the earth, which was now unmixed with any remains for the depth of about one foot. Having reached this point, however, we found parts of a human skeleton of a different character. There was no coffin, for Orientals never use them. Henry Martyn was of course buried uncoffined, in immediate contact with the mother soil—literally “dust to dust.” There now lay bones in a state of decomposition, namely, several of the long bones,

the right side of the skull, and most of the lower jaw. These, doubtless, were the real objects of our search. We carefully laid them aside, and on we dug through another layer of earth, underneath which appeared a mixed mass of human bones, evidently of remote date. These in like manner having removed, we continued digging until the lowest depth yet stirred by the sexton's spade was reached.

There we paused and mused as follows: Long years ago a grave was needed for the corpse of a lonely stranger. They chose this spot, and all remains of former inmates, found in process of digging were collected according to custom, and placed *en masse* at the bottom. These being covered with a considerable bed of earth, the "sacred relics" of one of England's noblest sons were laid upon it and the grave was filled up. For a year it remained unmarked, and just within its bosom were thrown some poor outcasts—a friendless widow—a neglected orphan, who alone thus appropriately shared the Missionary's resting place!

The precious remains were then reverently taken up, conveyed to the Mission premises, buried in a vault, and the monument erected over them. The name, encircled by a carved wreath, is cut severally in English, Armenian, Persian, and Turkish, on the four faces of the obelisk. On the four sides of the base is the following inscription in the corresponding languages:

CHAPLAIN OF THE HON. EAST INDIA COMPANY,  
BORN AT TRURO, ENGLAND, FEBRUARY 18, 1781,  
DIED AT TOCAT, OCTOBER 16, 1812,

HE LABORED FOR MANY YEARS IN THE EAST, STRIVING TO  
BENEFIT MANKIND BOTH IN THIS WORLD AND IN THAT TO COME.

HE TRANSLATED THE HOLY SCRIPTURES INTO HINDOOSTANEE AND PERSIAN,  
AND PREACHED THE GOD AND SAVIOUR OF WHOM THEY TESTIFY.  
HE WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED IN THE EAST, WHERE HE WAS KNOWN AS  
A MAN OF GOD.

The spot where now lie the remains of this great and good man is the centre of a terrae about 50 yards in length and 30 in depth, raised 20 feet above the ground next beneath it on the side hill. Toeat is built in a natural amphitheatre, of which the Mission grounds occupy a portion nearly in the centre of the sloping sides, commanding a fine view of the whole. As you stand by the grave, nearly the whole city, with its domes, minarets, and tiled roofs, lies spread out at your feet, and rises on both sides to a considerable height, the semicircle of hill itself attaining an elevation of at least a thousand feet. This amphitheatre is bounded on the left by the rugged heights and ruined turrets of the citadel, while a still taller hill, with a lofty and rocky peak, closes the view on the right. Beyond the town is a broad flat, covered with the rich vegetation of the gardens watered by the Iris, which flows from the right to the left. And farther still, a series of hills and valleys, studded with villas

and covered with vineyards, upon which play the shadows from the clouds, rise higher and still higher, until the view is closed in by a lofty range of mountains. The terrace which is used as our Mission cemetery is enclosed on the sides by a wall, separating it from neighboring gardens, shaded with trees, and filled with the sound of running brooks. They are a favorite resort of nightingales, whose warblings may be heard in the early morn or by moonlight.

There is an interesting circumstance connected with this spot, which should not be omitted. The weeping willow is rare in Turkey. The only one I ever saw in Northern Asia Minor, was a beautiful specimen of that most graceful of trees, growing in the yard of the Catholic church at Tocat: it had been brought from abroad. I begged, as a favor, a few cuttings from it, and planted them by a watercourse, where they soon took root and throve wonderfully. Not long after, a violent wind prostrated the parent tree, and it perished. Two of the young trees were transplanted to Martyn's grave, and the rest to different parts of the Mission grounds. Three years ago those premises were destroyed by fire, and the trees completely scathed. The only weeping willows I now know in that whole region of country, are those whose delicate boughs droop over, and with every breath of heaven sweep athwart the monument of Henry Martyn, and of another Henry, my own firstborn, who sleeps by his side.

When Providence sent us to Tocat, there to preach the Gospel, our minds were strongly impressed with the belief that God was about to answer the prayers this holy man had, doubtless, in his dying hour, offered for the salvation of this people—prayers which had been reiterated ever since by many in all Christendom, as they perused the touching narrative of his labors, his sufferings, and his death. This belief proved to be well founded: four months after our arrival, twelve, the apostolic number, made a public profession of their faith in Christ alone for salvation and of their consecration to Him, and were organized into an evangelical church. During the seven years of our stay, despite many persecutions and trials, forty-seven have thus been admitted, who still honor their Christian profession. And it is interesting to remark that while most of them are Armenians, the harmonizing character of their faith is shown by the fact that one is a Greek, another a Gypsy (the first of that despised people who has become a convert in Turkey), and another, still, an Abyssinian woman, who was once a slave, stolen from her father's house, and has found here both temporal and spiritual freedom—the first, too, of this oppressed race who has professed the truth as it is in Jesus in this Missionary field. And, besides, some eighteen young men have been educated here for labor among their own people, all of whom are now, it is believed, engaged, in some form, in the great work of spreading the knowledge

of the truth, while three of them are eminently useful ministers and pastors.

It is painful to cast a shadow upon this cheering picture. Stand by Henry Martyn's grave, and look behind you. You see no longer the school of the prophets, nor the chapel where the Word was once preached, but blackened ruins instead. The torch of the incendiary has been there, and the wrath of the foe has burned down our "pleasant habitation." But this work consists not in stones and mortar. It has its foundations in living men, and these the burning flames cannot reach. The God who has already done such great things there, can do greater still. We will hope in Him ever.

The accompanying picture, printed in oil colors, is a faithful copy of the original taken upon the spot. There stands the tomb, facing the northwest, and shaded by the weeping willows. It used to be a favorite resort of our students, and is still visited by many people of all sects. One of our pupils is preaching to an attentive hearer, a visitor from abroad, from the open Bible—a scene of frequent occurrence. The girl on the right is the daughter of one of our church members. Rose bushes line the walks; a lamb and a tame deer feed upon the abundant grass. Beyond the wall can be seen the trees of some of the neighboring gardens.

NEW YORK, *June*, 1863.

Rev. William Clark, now of Brattleboro', Vt., but formerly for several years a Missionary of the A. B. C. F. M., at Arabkir and Constantinople, writes as follows:

*June 1, 1863.*

REV. H. J. VAN LENNEP, D. D.,

My dear Sir:

Many thanks for a copy of your picture of the "Tomb of Henry Martyn," which you have kindly sent me. I prize it highly. Having visited the spot where this tomb is erected, in that secluded yet lovely part of the Mission grounds, at Tocat, in Asia Minor, I can testify to the fidelity and accuracy of the representation.

The persons introduced into the picture exhibit also most strikingly, as well as truthfully, the costume of the country.

Yours truly,

WILLIAM CLARK.

---



